

VZCZCXYZ0001  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAM #0644/01 0430805  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 120805Z FEB 07  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7003  
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 4541  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2908  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3481  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0557  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0471

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000644

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE ALSO FOR PRM AND NEA, CAIRO FOR DOETSCH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2017  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [JO](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: JORDAN-IRAQ BORDER: TRAFFIC DECREASING

REF: A. AMMAN 571 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. HENZEL-ALBRIGHT EMAIL OF 02/07/07

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Traffic at the Jordan-Iraq border has declined in recent months, but remains considerable. The decline appears to be due to the danger of traveling to Jordan by road, and to Jordanian officials' continuing exercise of their discretion in a case-by-case adjudication of requests for entry. Rates of Iraqis' travel through Queen Alia International Airport remain unclear. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The head of Embassy Amman's Civil Affairs Liaison Team (CALT) and Amman refcoord met Jordanian police, army and customs officials at the Karama/Trebil border crossing on the Iraqi-Jordanian frontier February 8. Port Director Colonel Atef and Customs Director Colonel Jehad told emboffs that average gross daily entry at this crossing (the only official overland entry point from Iraq to Jordan) had dropped from approximately 1,000-1,500 persons/day in late 2006 to 500-700/day at the Karama/Trebil crossing in "recent weeks." (NOTE: Not all of these crossers are Iraqis.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) NOTE: Ministry of Interior contacts have been unable to provide post with a clear picture of trends in Iraqi traffic through Queen Alia International Airport. Post will continue to seek information on this traffic. END NOTE.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The border officials' recent conversations with emboffs are consistent with the more precise entry/exit figures for January 2007 and November 2006 that Jordanian military liaison officers posted at this crossing recently provided us (ref B) as well as net entry figures that MFA officials provided to the visiting UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees February 7. According to these latter sources, 11,841 Iraqis entered Jordan through the Karama/Trebil crossing in January (a decrease of 19.3 percent from November 2006) and 9,440 Iraqis returned to Iraq (a decrease of 5.7 percent from November) leaving net entry of 2,401 individuals or approximately 77 persons/day.

[1](#)5. (C) Asked about current trends, these border officials acknowledged that traffic had been "slow" in February, noting that only 15 private vehicles had entered during the day of our visit.

[1](#)6. (C) Border contacts believe the primary reason for the drop-off is growing insecurity in Anbar province. They note that commercial traffic is also dropping and that drivers are

increasingly using alternative overland routes (via Turkey).

¶17. (C) However, border contacts also attribute the fall-off partly to enhanced Jordanian security precautions. They noted that the GOJ has now established biometric data collection methods at the border, cutting down on the number of Iraqis who would previously make two or three border crossing attempts per day with different identifies using falsified documents. They also confirmed that they currently have instructions not to admit unknown Iraqis between the ages of 18-35, whether men or women. However, they have discretion to make exceptions. COMMENT: Judging from the continuing volume of traffic (para. 2) these "exceptions" may be quite frequent. END COMMENT.

¶18. (C) According to the Port Director, Iraqi officials are also contributing to the drop-off in Iraqi entries by turning away Iraqis before they reach the Jordanian checkpoints, although some Iraqis between the ages of 18-35 are permitted to present themselves to GOJ officials on humanitarian grounds or "due to corruption." A Jordanian Customs official confirmed that Jordanian officials at the border have some discretion and have allowed individuals in on humanitarian grounds. For example, he cited the recent case of an Iraqi military-age male who was permitted to visit his dying father when his treatment in a Jordanian hospital was verified. Asked if Iraqis ever present themselves as asylum seekers or refugees, Jihad said that he had not encountered a single case in his year of an Iraqi claiming asylum at the border. He also confirmed that Palestinian refugees seeking entry from Iraq are not permitted entry "on security grounds," adding that no Palestinians had attempted to enter Jordan for the last six months.

¶19. (C) Jordanian officials at the border told Emboffs they believe the majority of Iraqis currently seeking entry to Jordan via this crossing are from Baghdad. They said Jordan's current entry restrictions appear to be widely known by this population but have not proven to be a deterrent.

¶10. (C) Jordanian border officials told emboffs that most failed entry seekers have adequate means to secure transport back to Baghdad. They add that Iraqi border officials are successfully securing transport to Baghdad for the few who arrive without the means to return on their own. Due to a current security threat, emboffs were unable to meet with Iraqi border officials to verify these reports. However, CALT officials travel regularly to this crossing and have seen no indication that new informal settlements of stranded travelers are emerging. NOTE: a group of approximately 200 Iranian Kurdish refugees formerly resident at the now-closed UNHCR Al Tash camp near Ramadi continue to remain informally camped at this border. END NOTE.

¶11. (C) UNHCR tells emboffs it is working to step up its presence at the Jordan-Iraq border. UNHCR maintains a field office at Ruweished (55 miles from the border) but has not had a regular presence at the Karama Crossing since it closed its "No Man's Land" transit camp paying bi-weekly visits to the border since February and are also stepping up Government training programs. MOI and MFA officials have expressed appreciation for training sessions UNHCR has provided at HQ level over the past month, and have agreed to UNHCR's request to carry out a specific course for border officials in Amman next week.

¶12. (C) COMMENT: The recent reports from working-level Jordanian border officials' that their default setting is now to turn away - though with exceptions permitted - both men and women from Iraq between the ages of 18 and 35 contradicts what officials in Amman have said. Post will request from the GOJ an update on its policy towards Iraqis seeking admission to Jordan by land and also by air.

Visit Amman's Classified Web Site at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman/>

